

The Messenger

Washington Christian Academy
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REFLECTIONS

Larry Danner, Headmaster

Abraham

Sometimes God does things we wish He wouldn't. He acts in ways we do not understand, in ways that leave us puzzled, uncomfortable, even hurt. He does things that drive us to ask hard questions and to search helter-skelter for resolutions. We go to Him hunting desperately for answers, only to discover that our tracking has led us to an abyss of silence and He won't let us in on what He is doing. In that gulf, that space between the questions we ask and the answers we seek, lies the mystery of the providence of God. It is a mystery at which we marvel and one which we dread, especially when it involves our children. We fear that God may test us in ways forbidding, asking of us what He has asked of others.

As a parent, Abraham faced such a test with his son Isaac in Genesis 22, and his experience provides insight for our own. His test was difficult for two reasons. First, it was unexpected. It was unexpected in what it asked and when it asked it. Abraham could never have anticipated that God would ask him to sacrifice his son. Why this? He could never have guessed that God would ask him to sacrifice his son after waiting over a hundred years for him to be born. Why now?

Second, the test was difficult because it was unexplained. One morning God just told Abraham to take his son on a journey to a particular place, and when they arrived there to sacrifice him, no reason given, simply God, without explanation, asking the unthinkable and expecting the impossible.

How would we respond to such a test? I do not know, but I do know how Abraham responded. He obeyed. The text records no words spoken after hearing the command, just six verbs, clear and direct (vs. 3) action taken immediately and without reservation. His was a ready obedience. His was also a steady obedience. For three days and forty-five miles he walked with his son by his side, knowing he was to take the life of his child at the journey's end; yet, he never wavered, never stalled, just relentlessly obeyed, one step, one heartache at a time.

How do we account for such obedience? How do we

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CONTRACT SIGNED

On Sixty-Acre School Site

On May 9, 2003, Washington Christian Academy signed a contract for \$2.5 million to purchase a sixty-acre parcel of land located on Batchellors Forest Road in Olney, Maryland. Signing of the contract culminates a search of several years by the Board for a permanent WCA home, and a year-long period of negotiation with the property owners. The contract provides for closing within three years, subject to obtaining approval from Montgomery County to build a school on the property.

Larry Danner and the Board of Directors are truly excited about the possibilities this property affords for fulfilling WCA's vision of becoming a leader among Reformed Christian schools. Finding a permanent home for the school has been one of the primary objectives of the WCA Strategic Plan. An educational environment that expresses our commitment to excellence and inspires the students to develop intellectually has long been the desire of the entire school community.

The property is centrally located within Montgomery County, approximately eight miles north of our current school on Franwall Avenue, with good access from both

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This quilted rendition of the WCA logo, created by Apryl West, aunt of freshman Alana Ahlers, was purchased at the Promise Tree Auction, mounted in a plexiglass case, and donated to the school for display.

The King's Players



As I sat wildly applauding for the latest WCA theatre production, *Our Town*, I felt the normal pride a mother feels when her child has performed well in any event. My son had learned his lines, remembered his part, portrayed his character with depth, and contributed to something bigger than himself. As I looked around at other parents, friends, and families, I realized they all felt the same lump-in-the-throat sense of satisfaction over another job well done in a play that moved our hearts and made us think. As I thought through the last several months of getting ready for this play, and the last two years in which the theatre program has been developing at WCA, I realized the incredible value that theatre has. It goes far beyond a parent's pride, or the short-lived smiles of the applauding audience. What the theatre program has brought to WCA in its

short existence is an accomplishment that furthers all we believe in at WCA – the growth of students in a Christian environment, the closeness of our community, and a better appreciation for the discipline of the arts, one of the great gifts of God.

The full-fledged theatre program began in November 2001 when Mrs. Amanda Westly appeared on the scene as a volunteer willing to start a weekly drama club. In their second month, they were performing *A Charlie Brown Christmas* for the Fourth Presbyterian School. Spurred on by significant donations, the troupe named themselves The King's Players, and thrilled audiences with Jane Austen's *Emma* (stage play by Sandra F. Asher) in the spring of 2002. Parents and friends who recognized Mrs. Westly's talent quickly underwrote the theatre program for this '02 – '03 school year. The result has been two successful productions, *You Can't Take It With You*, and *Our Town*. Through her theatre elective course, Mrs. Westly has brought a number of students more deeply into the intellectual discipline of theatre.

Many of us have enjoyed watching WCA students grow through the theatre program. We see them developing the confidence to sell themselves at the auditions and learning to cheer others on to do the same, developing their particular characters until they seem real, learning the difference between memorizing the lines and seeing how a whole person can be portrayed. Next, they must learn to work together with others, including overlooking others' idiosyncrasies, to give and take constructive criticism, to find the perfect timing, to ad lib as they develop better verbal and communication skills, and to give up one's own particular style for the benefit of the whole play. The actors and crew must learn perseverance from the initial excitement, into the dull times of learning the minutia of a script, and finally through the long hours of perfecting the details. The last two weeks alone call for time management skills and learning to live with less sleep!

The rewards of camaraderie that develop between these students and the thrill of reaching an audience (one actress in *Our Town* told me

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ABRAHAM

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explain such a response to God's mysterious, severe providence? Abraham obeyed because he trusted, because he had faith in His Father. He did not know that God would not require him to go through with it, but he did know that whatever happened, God would go through it with him. Abraham obeyed God instantly because he knew God intimately.

Trusting God with our children is a fearful thing. When we as parents stand on the edge of that abyss of silence, screaming to the other side and hearing only the echo of our own despair in return, when we plead for an explanation and He won't let us in on what He is doing, when we with heart breaking cry, "Why this?" or "Why Now?" and when we are confronted with the mystery of God's providence, Abraham's response must be ours. We must trust Him. We must trust Him because there is nothing else we can do. We must trust Him because it is in trusting, even through pain, that we remember that our children are His, even more than they are ours, that though we give them birth, He gives them life, and that though our love for them is great, it is but the slightest expression of the love He has had for them from all eternity in Christ Jesus. For as long as He has been, they have been in His heart.

The greatest gift we can give our children is a legacy of trusting the providence of God, even when it is silent. We can give this gift because we know that though He has not revealed Himself to us fully, He has revealed Himself to us truly. We and our children can embrace the mystery of His will because we have been embraced by the One whose will is the mystery. Δ



Above left: James Hoobler relaxes into his role as Stage Manager in *Our Town*. Above, Mrs. Webb and daughter Emily, played by Allison Dixon and Erica Gropp, snap imaginary beans.

Development Corner

As our fiscal year comes to a close on June 30, we notice again that the children of God's people do seem to be the apple of His eye. Here are the gifts He has given us through your hands:

►The Academy Fund Drive has once again stirred many hearts to give to WCA. Gifts total \$210,400. The capital and undesignated portion of that is \$147,600, with several pledges still expected this month.

►The Board of Directors conducted a Phone-a-thon this spring to ask every parent to support the Academy Fund. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. Gifts are totaling \$3,500 so far, and will be double-matched by members of the Board of Directors.

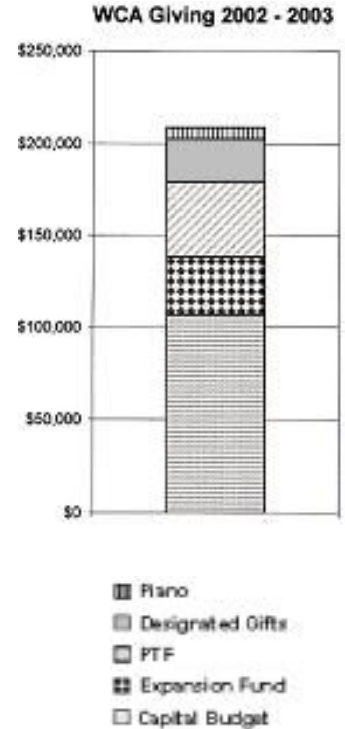
►Grandparents contributed generously toward our purchase of a new Steinway upright piano, with three parents matching most of their gifts. Proceeds

from the Christmas Bazaar were designated for fine arts and also helped us buy the piano. Finally, a small amount already budgeted for a piano brought this \$14,000 purchase within reach. Praise Him with piano and song!

►Parent-Teacher Fellowship events are also an avenue for your generosity. Gift wrap sales directed \$8,000 toward our athletic program, and the Christmas Bazaar proceeds provided the new banner by the front entrance, as well as supported fine arts needs. Through the Promise Tree Auction, you contributed more than \$30,000 (up from \$23,000 last year) to our tuition-assistance program.

►Sixty acres of beautiful land are now under contract (see page 1). Your gifts to the Expansion Fund since the spring of 2001, your prayers, and the countless hours of expert volunteer labor made this contract possible. God has given us an amazing opportunity. Expect great things as He brings it to fruition

—Robin U. Gropp
Director of Advancement



Praise the Lord!...

Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;

Praise Him with the psaltery and harp!

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;

Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

Praise Him with loud cymbals;

Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals!

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord!

Psalm 150



Sound Investment

We do indeed praise our all-knowing God for meeting the needs of our school as He sees fit, as well as the desires of our hearts as we bring those before Him.

On that note, Washington Christian Academy announces the arrival of our new Steinway piano. The opportunity to

purchase this beautifully crafted instrument was made possible through the generous gifts of our grandparents, matched by three parents, and completed through Christmas Bazaar proceeds and our own budget.

Since its founding, WCA has valued the fine arts as central to its educational program. Even when resources have been less than optimal, the giftedness of our students has surfaced and found nurture here. Many of us have fond memories of little anxious fingers doing their best on "well-seasoned" ivories. But now the time has come, through God's goodness, to have a piano that rewards the effort of the performer. Our new Steinway piano exemplifies the kind of educational experience we continually work toward at WCA. In fact, when I read the Steinway company's description of their craftsmanship, I thought of our students: "The Steinway creation is an incomparable creation, a unique achievement that sets the world standard for how a piano should look, play and sound....a rare and enduring creation that is handed down with pride from one generation to the next." Isn't that how we view the children of God's covenant, too?

Since it arrived in the last week of May, our Steinway has already accompanied *Our Town* with soft hymns played by Pat Bushouse. In chapel, the piano was featured among the instruments and voices of *Alternate Melody*, from Church of the Atonement. On the last day of school, Ryan McGoff returned to WCA to play the Steinway at our Lower School Awards Ceremony. Some passersby in our hallway have heard Mrs. Fanara playing Rachmaninoff, others enjoyed the sounds of Beethoven.

The piano represents an anchor purchase in our plan to continue to support our program with first-class resources. We hope every student, parent, grandparent, and friend will be blessed with the beauty of our music when you visit the school.

—Claire McGoff
Parent



Dog, by David Vander Haak, 4th grade. The art works in this issue were on view with many others at WCA during its Fine Arts Week in May.

The Iditarod at WCA

When I arrived at WCA one March afternoon, the gloomy early morning skies had parted to a warm southerly breeze. I took up a position on the sodden grass with a view of many Alaskan towns.

The traditional WCA 4th Grade Iditarod is patterned after the famous Alaskan dog sled race. It begins with a sprint from Anchorage to Fairbanks, or, for the unimaginative, a mud-caked dash from one end of the soccer field to the other. Each team has four students, two being mushers, who ride on or push their sled, and two pulling the sled as “dogs.” It should be noted that the position of “dog” is a coveted one.

Parents like me who just came to watch and expected the fourth-graders to just mush through the paces were in for a surprise. We thought the kids were just *pretending* to run the Iditarod! We were in for a thrill-a-minute.

As at the America’s Cup, design specifications were the first point of contention. It began with a most curious structural sled design: Team #6 used a fat wheel. As you may recall, a fat wheel tracks more efficiently over a mud slick and soggy surface than the conventional thin metal wheel design, which often gets entangled in the muck. Needless to say, Team #6, consisting of Chris Carter, Patrick Dolan, Kevin Korte, and Bret Young, won the sprint portion of this race.

Soon protests were lodged against the fat wheel, the usual lane violations, etc. These protests had a beneficial effect: the dogs got a much-needed rest and equipment repairs were made. Goggles were re-adjusted and the dogs took off again toward the next of the 13 stops and checkpoints.

Suddenly, the entire wheel of Team #4’s sled disintegrated before our very eyes. Was it a freak accident or sabotage? We knew it to be the former, but some of the children went for high drama and claimed the latter. The loss of the wheel made for some tough mushing using only

3 wheels, and the four girls were seen actually carrying their sled at times.

Just before the sixth checkpoint, Team #5, in a bizarre move, appeared to veer off-course. The trick worked as many of the following sleds took the bait and wound up at the seventh checkpoint, Kaltag, completely missing the sixth checkpoint, Galena. Rumors arising from secretly obtained photos suggest that the detour was occasioned by a desire to trade candy bars and dog food with another team, but the damage had been done. Many sleds just skipped the sixth checkpoint, accepting the penalty and moved on. Others made a maddening dash against oncoming sleds and pedestrians to backtrack to Galena.

Sensing the end was in sight and not wanting to leave anything to chance, Team #8, composed of Stephanie Minite, Hope Johnston, Nicole Stewart, and Samantha Calkins, left a trail of black pepper as they dashed from Checkpoint #13, The White Mountains, into Nome, taking the checkered flag of victory.

But the most inspirational part of the race occurred when the final sled team approached the finish line—and this revealed the true strength of character in our children. As this haggard team struggled with exhaustion, determined to complete the race, the entire 4th grade class rushed out to help these mushers home. We, teachers and parents alike, were visibly moved at the awe-inspiring actions of the class.

—Zack Koutsandreas
Parent

Wildcat Winnings: Baseball

The varsity boys baseball team won the MISAL 2003 championship—both regular season and tournament. They defeated Eshkol 12-3 in the semi-final, with Steve Horlacher pitching. Mike Taney pitched the championship against Yeshiva, achieving 17 strikeouts and going 4-for-4 at the plate. Go Wildcats! △



Eunice Lee and Rachel Kenlaw, 2nd grade, working on the *Dolphin* mosaic.

Meet the New WCA Principal

Washington Christian Academy received good news this May when Bill Zimmerman agreed to join the WCA staff. Mr. Zimmerman will serve as the principal for both the Lower and Upper Schools for next year. His coming is part of an organizational restructuring designed to prepare the school for future growth.

In his address at the May Society meeting, Larry Danner, WCA headmaster, announced Mr. Zimmerman's coming and set it in the context of WCA's immediate and long-term goals, which focus on four challenges: improving the efficiency of our operation, enhancing our programs for our students, improving our service to school families, and extending our impact into the community and beyond. "God willing," he said, "we will improve our facilities, develop a faculty second to none, and build alliances with like-minded Christian organizations locally and nationally. And we will tell our story."



The organizational restructuring will begin this year and will evolve over the next three years. Carol Parent, who has served as the Lower School principal for the last several years, announced her desire to reduce her workload to part-time due to her health. She resigned as principal, but will continue to do part-time administrative work. Jan Adams, the current Upper School principal, will assume new responsibilities next year. Mrs. Adams will focus on

three areas: teaching, college guidance, and assisting the headmaster on a variety of administrative projects.

Mr. Zimmerman will assume his duties as Lower and Upper School principal beginning July 2003. In Mr. Danner's words at the Society meeting, "Mr. Zimmerman brings to WCA a love of students, a passion for academic excellence, a commitment to the Reformed faith, and an educational and spiritual leadership that is encased in a servant's heart."

Mr. Zimmerman received his B.A. and M.A. in History from Rutgers University, graduating with Honors and as a Phi Beta Kappa. He has extensive teaching experience, both at the college level (Monmouth College) and at private schools in Connecticut (Greens Farms Academy), Rhode Island (The Lincoln School), Massachusetts (Philips Academy/Andover), and Maryland (Landon School in Bethesda). While at Landon, he served as chair of the history department, directed the Consortium of Independent Schools program, and served on accreditation teams for other private schools. In addition, he has been the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and has been a participant, moderator, and presenter at various workshops and conferences. In the past four years, he has served as the founding headmaster of Fourth Presbyterian School, in Potomac, Maryland. Mr. Zimmerman lives in Germantown with his wife, Karen, and their three children, Katherine (10), Christopher (8), and Rebecca (5). Δ

CONTRACT ON PROPERTY

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Georgia Avenue and Route 28. An analysis of the property by civil engineers on our behalf indicates a large developable area that can accommodate a K-12 program of 750 students or more, with all of the facilities and playing fields needed to achieve fully the mission of the school.

The Board has retained attorneys, architects, civil engineers, and traffic consultants for assistance in seeking County approval for construction. These tasks are already in process:

- ▶ Comprehensive description of all educational programs and activities to be conducted on the site to inform the process of designing the campus.
- ▶ Development of a preliminary plan for use of the property, indicating the location of buildings, parking areas, and playing fields.
- ▶ Preliminary design work on the campus buildings and their locations by the architect.
- ▶ Participation in the Montgomery County Planning Board consideration of the new Olney Master Plan, including

staff meetings, Board member lobbying, public hearings, and citizens' meetings.

- ▶ Planning Board pre-filing (and perhaps post-filing) work on the preliminary plan of subdivision.
- ▶ WSSC negotiations over sewer service for the property.
- ▶ State Highway Administration consultations over the interchange project at Georgia Ave and Norbeck Rd.
- ▶ Negotiations with the County Attorney on the religious use/special exception exemption for WCA.

We give thanks to God for providing us with this property. All who have participated in this process know without question that we could not have come this far unless the Lord was intervening on our behalf. As we go forward and seek the approvals and financial contributions needed to purchase the land and build the school, our faith and confidence is in Him who can do all things beyond what we can imagine. During this exciting time we ask for your continued prayers and support for all that is to be done. To God be the glory!

*—Paul DiPiazza
Former Board Member*

with a big smile that she actually saw me cry during the performance—and it was true) are well worth the hard work that must be put into a play.

And, to be honest, the kids aren't the only ones having fun. Teasing girls' hair into the pompadour style, building sets, designing a program book and marquee, putting up lights, or selling cheesecake during intermission—you hardly ever see us doing these things without a lot of laughter and talk. We know more volunteers will be needed in the future, and we ask parents and friends to join in, knowing their rewards are great.

The whole community benefits as excellent plays are offered at inexpensive ticket fees for all to come and enjoy. Together we think, feel, and learn through the characters. It is sheer joy to laugh at a character, to feel the pain of another, to see the results of a another's bad behavior, even to cry at a tender moment. To join together as a community to enjoy these plays and each other binds us together – what a gift of God!

I have been so impressed with all that has happened in the theatre program these past few years. I so agree with our headmaster, Mr. Larry Danner, that "Theatre enables students to discover and use gifts that otherwise go undetected and undeveloped. It enhances their understanding of the power of the spoken word, of sound, of visual presentation. Theatre puts students in the roles of writers, actors, set builders, costume designers, stage crews, and sound and light technicians in a way that fosters both discipline and creativity. Theatre provides a shared experience that pulls together students, teachers, audiences, and financial supporters into a single community. It enriches life for all who are a part of it."

On a personal level, I am thankful for the way this program has helped my son grow, his fellow actors and crew develop, myself and other volunteers connect, and our community grow in its appreciation for the arts. It is exciting to know the theatre program will only bring more to our school as it continues to grow. I can hardly wait for next year's auditions!

—Lavonne Johnston
Parent



Chalk pastel *Bird* by Emily Musy, 5th grade.



Junior Laszlo Korossy's charcoal drawing of King St. Steven (Szent Istvan).

Welcome New Board Members

Dr. Preston Campbell: A specialist in pediatric pulmonology, Preston is the executive director of medical affairs for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and is on the faculty at Johns Hopkins University. His work has given him experience on several nonprofit boards. The Campbells currently have 3 children at WCA and attend McLean Bible church.

Dr. Vincent Prestipino: Vince has a career in dentistry, with an office in Bethesda, and has served on the boards of several other organizations. He and his wife Tammy have 3 children at WCA, and Tammy has also served on the Board. They are members of the Fourth Presbyterian Church.

Continuing members of our Board of Directors are Karen Brown, Don Drew, Carey Hoobler, Sterling Mehring, Mark Steimer, Andy Warren, and Hank Williams.

Many thanks to our outgoing members for their faithful service: Doug Bratt, Howard Bushouse, Tee Clark, Tammy Prestipino, and Pernelope Whitby. Δ

On the CSI Board

Mrs. Jan Adams, WCA Upper School Principal, has been elected to the Board of Directors for Christian Schools International. We are honored to have a staff member on this board, and we know that Mrs. Adams will bring wisdom and inspiration to the national organization of Reformed Christian schools.

From Here and There

Volunteer of the Year Award recipients: *Paul DiPiazza* for his perseverance in securing a contract on the Gandel property, and *Pam Garren* for outstanding service as the PTF Coordinator.

WCA Alumni who were recently deployed in the service of our country were featured on the bulletin board of Mrs. Brown's 4th grade class, and the students are regularly praying for each of them individually.

Agur Adams, WCA '99, graduated from the Naval Academy, and received his commission as a Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corp.

Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia has granted *Christina Mason*, WCA '00, a summer scholarship in Germany to do research for her Master's thesis in German history. She is an inducted member of Phi Beta Kappa, and will graduate next year from Emory University through a Special Master's Program offered to undergraduates who have shown excellence in their undergraduate studies.

Leah Harford and *John Bratt*, seniors, have been named National Merit Scholars.

Senior Skip Day: One day our seniors arrived expecting a normal day of classes, but soon were herded onto the bus and taken to kayaking on the Potomac. Their gift T-shirt brags, "I played hookey with the Headmaster."

Mrs. Gropp and Mrs. Adams treated the seniors to lunch at *Woomi*, and inducted them into the 25.4.25 Alumni Club.

Students in grades 9-12 rented tuxedos, bought gowns, danced, and ate elegant food aboard the *Odyssey* cruise ship on June 7. "Prom isn't as special anywhere else," says junior *Elisa Mayes*.

Laszlo Korossy, WCA '04, participated in the US *Naval Academy's Summer Seminar*, a six-day program for high school juniors to give them a foretaste of what the Service Academies are about.

Good Samaritan Award recipients: *Brigitte Stogbuchner* and *Caitlin McGovern* (Upper School), *Talia Henderson* (Middle School), *Sam Drew* (Grades 4-5), and *Sam Thomas* (Grades 1-3).

Daniel Award recipients: *Alexandra Havrilishyn* (Upper School), *Nick Tallman* (Middle School), *Ryan Olthoff* (Grades 4-5), and *Mackenzie Schutt* (Grades 1-3).

4th grade students turned themselves into "wax museum" figures of American heroes, and provided facts about the person they portrayed to enrich their Social Studies on the West.

WCA Choir sang at First Baptist Church of Rockville, and at the Church of the Atonement.

The 2nd grade students held their traditional spring program for their families, and provided a video of the event to all. What a special treat!



Flanked by **Lizzie Keegan** and **Heather Marsh**, sophomore **Luke Johnston** takes cover in soldier dugout at the earthen-works at Petersburg National Battlefield. Sophomores took a three-day camping trip around Civil War sites.

Mission Accomplished

The class of 2003 has completed their education at WCA, and is heading to the following places to further develop their God-given abilities "to occupy their places worthily in society, church, and state." Congratulations to our graduates. Serve God well!

Jonathan Bratt—Calvin College
Courtney Butcher—Gordon College
Gloria Chan—University of Maryland
Philip Gray—Montgomery College
Leah Harford—Georgetown University
Alexandra Havrilishyn—Queens University
Lauren Hoffsis—Messiah College
Kia Hollis—High Point University
Meredith Kitchens—Gordon College
Katie Maier—Messiah College
Joseph Mason—Undecided
Caitlin McGovern—Covenant College
Tinisha McMillan—St. John's University
Jason Morris—Montgomery College
Kizi N'Kodia—Montgomery College
Brigitte Stogbuchner—Missions Work
Lamara Toro—Montgomery College
Amy Van Dyk—Calvin College
Erin Watley—University of Maryland
Myaa Yeakey—Elon University Δ

To Ponder

We pray expectantly and confidently, not in spite of the sovereignty of God, but because of it.

—Dr. RC Sproul, *Tabletalk*, April 2003

Coram Deo

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